



June 26, 2007

Reply to Attn of: 140

TO: Distribution

FROM: 140/Chief Counsel

SUBJECT: Determination Regarding Attendance by GSFC Employees at a SOFIA  
Program Reception Hosted by USRA

On the evening of June 27, 2007, Universities Space Research Associates (USRA) will be hosting a reception at the Antelope Valley Country Club in Palmdale, California. The purpose of the reception is to celebrate the recent arrival and roll-out of the Stratospheric Observatory For Infrared Astronomy (SOFIA) 747-SP aircraft to the Dryden Flight Research Center (DFRC).

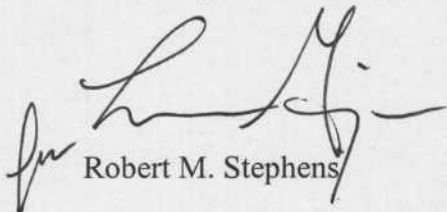
The aircraft was ferried to Dryden on May 31, 2007 from Waco, Texas, where a German-built 2.5-meter infrared telescope was installed and other major modifications to the plane were made over the past several years. SOFIA will undergo installation and integration of mission systems and a multi-phase flight test program at DFRC over the next three years that is expected to lead to a full operational capability to conduct astronomy missions in about 2009. During its expected 20-year lifetime, SOFIA will be capable of "Great Observatory" class astronomical science, providing astronomers with access to the visible, infrared and sub-millimeter spectrum, with optimized performance in the mid-infrared to sub-millimeter range.

The reception will follow a day of SOFIA program activities, which will feature presentations by Kevin Petersen, NASA DFRC Director; Dr. Pete Worden, NASA Ames Research Center (ARC) Director; Richard Howard, NASA Deputy Director, Astrophysics Division; Werner Klinkmann, DLR (German Space Agency) Deputy Head of Space Science; Erik Lindbergh (grandson of Charles Lindbergh), who will rededicate the SOFIA 747-SP aircraft; and Alan Stern, NASA Associate Administrator for Science.

The evening reception will be a widely-attended gathering, consisting of approximately 240 representatives from NASA, other government and military organizations, industry, and educational institutions, as well as other dignitaries, their spouses and guests. The cost of the event, which will include appetizers, dinner, desert, and refreshments, will be approximately \$85.00 per person. I find that the reception meets the requirements of a "widely-attended gathering," as defined in 5 C.F.R. § 2635.204(g)(2).

I further determine that there is an Agency interest in having GSFC personnel attend the event. Consistent with section 203(a)(3), of the National Aeronautics and Space Act of 1958, as amended (42 U.S.C. § 2473(a)(3)), the event will serve as an appropriate forum in which to encourage and foster, with invitees and their guests, the widest practical dissemination of information concerning NASA's mission, programs, and activities and the results thereof, including, in particular, the SOFIA program.

Accordingly, the GSFC employees invited to this event, whose duties do not substantially affect USRA, may accept an invitation for free attendance at the reception. They may also accept similar invitations for accompanying spouses or guests.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. M. Stephens", is written over the printed name. To the left of the signature is a small, stylized mark that looks like "for".

for Robert M. Stephens